(b) and (c) Based on the data available so far and the analysis done, the Government is of the view that there is no cause for immediate concern regarding the impact of Gulf war on Indian environment. The situation is, however, being monitored closely. Specific tasks allotted to Departments for continuous monitoring and study include collection of data from local and international sources, monitoring the position of the oil slick, analysis of biological samples from marine waters and studying the weather patterns closely to detect any effect on our environment.

Foreign visits by the Minister of External Affairs for settlement of the Gulf Crisis

*68. SHRI M. M. JACOB:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has recently visited a number of foreign countries for finding an early and peaceful settlement to the Gulf war;

(b) if so, the names of the countries which he has visited;

(c) the names of the VIPs he has met;

(d) the nature of the talks held and the outcome of the talks; and

(e) whether any progress has so far been made in the matter?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The then External Affairs Minister visited Yugoslavia from the 21st to the 23rd January. During his visit, he called on President Borisav Jovic and Prime Minister Ante Markovic and held discussions with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar. He visited Tehran on the 26th January and met President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. He again visited Belgrade on 12th February at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia to attending the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of 16 NAM countries.

(d) and (e) The talks centred round the search for an approach to bring the Gulf war to an end and restore peace in the region. Unfortunately, these efforts did not yield the desired result and ground action which we all wanted to prevent, has now commenced.

Shortage of passport books

*69. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a shortage of Passport Books at different Passport Offices in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government Press is not in a position to cope with the demand of the Passport Books;

(c) if so, whether there is any proposal for printing the Passport Books in a private press;

(d) the number of passport applications pending at the Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad at present; and

(e) by when the pending applications are likely to be cleared?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) 1845 applications were pending on 15 February 1991 for want of booklets. Another 10838 applications received in recent months are under process.

(e) 8000 passport booklets were supplied to Passport Office, Ahmedabad in February 1991 and arrears will be cleared thereafter in two months.

Sino-Indian Border Dispute

*70. SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of the recent talks which the Minister had held with the Chinese leaders on the Sino-Indian border dispute during his visit to Beijing;

(b) whether any early solution to the border dispute is in sight; and

(c) by when the next round of talks is likely to be held and what was the Chinese reaction to India's principled stand on the border issue in the East, in the middle sector and in the area adjacend to Kashmir in the West?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) During the recent visit to China of the then Minister of External Affairs, Shri Vidyacharan Shukla, the work of the Joint Working Group on the boundary question was reviewed, *inter alia*, by both sides. The *desire to work for a fair, reasonable and* mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question, through peaceful and friendly consultations, was reaffirmed.

(b) The boundary question is a complex one and would have to be resolved through patient negotiations. No timeframe can, therefore, be set for the conclusion of these negotiations.

(c) The next session of the Joint Working Group is expected to be held in Beijing by June, 1991. The positions of the two countries concerning the boundary question are well known. The two sides are currently engaged in defining the parameters for a boundary settlement and exploring how differences can be narrowed so that a fair and reasonable solution is arrived at.

Minister of External Affairs' visit to Sri Lanka

*71. SHRI G. G. SWELL:
SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he had visited Sri Lanka in the last week of January; if so, the outcome of the visit;

(b) whether Sri Lankans have asked for the abrogation of the present Indo-Sri Lanka Accord;

(c) the features in the Indo-Sri Lanka accord which the Sri Lankans found objectionable; and

(d) whether India have agreed to the abrogation of the accord and its replacement by a treaty of Friendship and Cooperation?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) The former External Affairs Minister's visit to Sri Lanka from 28—31 January 1991, while providing an opportunity to express our concern over the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka, also underlined our desire to develop allround bilateral relations, particularly in the economic, trade and cultural fields. Our belief was reaffirmed that only a negotiated political settlement of the ethnic issue would provide a viable solution to the problem, and that the political framework created by Sri Lanka following the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987, provided a good basis for a resonable and enduring settlement. We also stressed the need to pursue measures to bring the parties concerned to the negotiating table.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

DTC fleet

*72. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of DTC buses plying on the roads and the number of commuters who travelled in those buses during the months of December, 1990 and January, 1991;

(b) the reasons for reducing the number of buses; and

(c) whether there is any proposal not to ply DTC buses on Sundays?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI MANUBHAI KOTADIA: (a) The average number of DTC buses plying on the roads